

# FLITWICK LOWER SCHOOL

## Policy

### Complaints Procedure



### Introduction

From time to time parents may naturally have concerns about an aspect of their child's education. Often those concerns will resolve themselves, but on occasions parents may feel that the issue will need the School's help to be resolved.

The school will give careful consideration to all complaints and deal with them fairly and honestly. We will provide sufficient opportunity for any complaint to be fully discussed, and aim to resolve it through open dialogue and mutual understanding.

The complaints procedure will:

- encourage resolution of problems by **informal** means wherever possible;
- be easily **accessible** and **publicised**;
- be **simple** to understand and use;
- be **impartial**;
- be **non-adversarial**;
- allow **swift** handling with established **time-limits** for action and keeping people informed of the progress;
- ensure a full and **fair** investigation by an independent person where necessary;
- respect people's desire for **confidentiality**;
- address all the points at issue and provide an **effective** response and **appropriate** redress, where necessary;
- provide **information** to the school's senior management team so that services can be improved.

### An Informal Concern

Most complaints are best dealt with informally. If there are any concerns about the school or the education provided, please discuss the matter with the child's Class Teacher. It may be necessary to make an appointment which is convenient to both parents and teacher.

Please let the teacher know the nature of the concern when making an appointment so that they may investigate further, if necessary.

The purpose of the meeting should be to establish a solution or to agree a plan of action to resolve the concern. If the meeting fails to do so then an appointment to see the Key Stage Leader, with the next step being addressing the issue with the Assistant Head and, if required, finally a meeting with the Head teacher.

The Head teacher will normally make further investigations and meet with the complainant to suggest a workable solution. If it is felt that the matter is not satisfactorily resolved, a further meeting with the Head teacher should be requested or the matter should be made the subject of a formal complaint.

At this point it is important that due procedure is followed with a view to seeking resolution to a concern or complaint. A failure to follow the procedure may result in the procedure being terminated by the Governing Body.

### A Formal Complaint

If the concern is not resolved at the informal stage, it must be put in writing (Annex A) and passed to the Head teacher, who will either investigate the matter or delegate this responsibility to a senior colleague.

The complainant's letter should state the nature of the complaint, the steps taken to resolve it so far and the action that is considered appropriate by the complainant to remedy their concerns. In addition the complaint should include details which might assist an investigation such as names of potential witnesses, dates and times of events and copies of relevant documents. The Head teacher may meet with the complainant to clarify the

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matter. On the conclusion of the investigation, the Head teacher will write to the complainant with the outcome of the investigation. If the outcome of the investigation results in the implementation of staff disciplinary procedures, such procedures will remain strictly confidential.

The school will record the progress of the complaint and the final outcome. A complaint may be made in person, by telephone, or in writing. Complainants are to be given the option of completing a Complaint Form as shown in Annex A. At the end of the meeting or telephone call, the staff member should ensure that the complainant and the school have the same understanding of what was discussed and agreed. Notes of any meetings and any telephone calls are to be kept and a copy of any written response added to the record.

If the complainant is not satisfied with the manner in which the process has been followed, or if the complaint is about the Head teacher, then a full written complaint should be made to the Chair of Governors at the School's address. The Chair of Governors will write to complainant to confirm receipt of the letter and will review the way in which the complaint has been handled by the school and ensure that the issues have been dealt with properly and fairly. He/she will normally write to the complainant with the outcome of this process within a further **seven** school days. In some circumstances the Chair may ask another governor to carry out the investigation on their behalf.

As a part of this process, the Chair will collect other such evidence as is deemed necessary and may interview other witnesses. The Head teacher will be provided with a copy of the complaint and any additional evidence presented by the complainant or collected by the Chair.

Once there has been an opportunity for the Head teacher to consider this, he/she will meet separately with the Chair to present a response. A friend or representative may accompany the Head teacher at this meeting. On the conclusion of this meeting the complainant and Head teacher will be informed in writing of the outcome. The complainant will not be informed of any disciplinary or capability action which might ensue.

This will now bring the Chair's investigation to a close.

### Formal Panel Review

If the complainant is not satisfied with the manner in which the complaint has been investigated, a request may be made for the Governing Body to hold a formal review of the process which will take the form of a hearing. Any such request must be made in writing to the Chair within **two school weeks** of receiving notice of the outcome of the Chair's investigation and must state the reasons for the implementation of the next stage. Please note the complainant is not entitled to access any details of the investigation except for any statements that may have been provided by their child.

On receiving a formal request for the complaint to be taken to the next stage, the Chair of Governors will write to the complainant within **five** school days to inform the complainant of the date and time of the hearing and of the composition of the panel who will hear the complaint.

The hearing panel will consist of governors who have no detailed prior knowledge of the complaint, or connection with the complainant. The meeting will normally take place within **15 school days** of the complainant's request.

The hearing may take one of two forms at the discretion of the governing body. The complainant may be invited to attend the meeting, given the opportunity to inform the Governing Body of the details of their concern. The governors may seek further clarification of the detail of the concern. The complainant may bring a friend or representative with them to the hearing.

The Governors will then ask the complainant to leave and will then meet with the Head teacher and the Chair of the Governors to seek their view of the issue. The Head teacher may be accompanied by a friend or representative. Once the Governors have clarified any issues, the Head teacher and Chair of Governors will be asked to leave while they consider their response to the complaint.

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Alternatively, the meeting may follow the same course as described above with the complainant, the Head teacher and Chair in attendance for the duration of the hearing. In this case after both parties have stated their case and responded to questions, the complainant and the Head teacher and/or Chair of Governors will be requested to sum up their positions before being asked to leave. No further questioning will be allowed at this point. The Governors will then consider their response.

The Governing Body will write to the complainant and the Head teacher or Chair, as appropriate, within **five school days** of the hearing with their findings. The complainant will not be informed of any disciplinary or capability action which might follow. However, if the investigation does result in a change to the school's policies being implemented, the complainant will be informed of the detail of this. This will bring the involvement of the Governing Body to a close and further correspondence cannot be entered into.

If properly followed, this procedure will limit the number of complaints that become protracted. However, there will be occasions when, despite all stages of these procedures having been followed, the complainant remains dissatisfied. If the complainant tries to re-open the same issue, the Chair of the Governing Body is able to inform them in writing that the procedure has been exhausted and that the matter is now closed.

#### **Secretary of State**

The decision of the panel is final. If the complainant is still not satisfied, they may wish to put their complaint to the Secretary of State for Education and Skills. If a complainant believes that the Governing Body has acted illegally or arbitrarily in handling the complaint, then the complainant may make representation to the Secretary of State for Education and Skills.

#### **Monitoring and review**

The Governing Body monitors the complaints procedure in order to ensure that all complaints are handled properly. The Head teacher logs all formal complaints received by the school and records how they were resolved. Governors examine this log on an annual basis and consider the need for any changes to the procedure.

Policy Agreed by staff:	
Policy Agreed by Governors:	November 2015
Last Review Date:	September 17
Next Review date:	September 19
Signed:	J.New

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Annex A

### School Complaints Procedure

Please complete and return to the Head Teacher who will acknowledge receipt and explain what action will be taken.

Your name:

Pupil's name:

Your relationship to the pupil:

Address:

Postcode:

Day time telephone number:

Evening telephone number:

Please give details of your complaint:

What action, if any, have you already taken to try and resolve your complaint:

(Who did you speak to and what was the response)?

What actions do you feel might resolve the problem at this stage?

Are you attaching any paperwork? If so, please give details.

Signature:

Date:

Official use

Date acknowledgement sent:

By whom:

Complaint referred to:

Date:



#### Annex B

#### General Complaints procedure

#### STAGE 1

#### INFORMAL STAGE

Concern expressed/received



Discuss with Class Teacher



If not resolved

Discuss with Key Stage Leader



If not resolved

Discuss with Assistant Head



If not resolved

Discuss with Head teacher



If not resolved

#### STAGE 2

#### FORMAL STAGE

Complaint



Put concerns into writing to Head teacher (Annex A)



Head teacher investigates concerns fully and responds in writing to complainant within 5 school days



If not resolved

Complainant contacts Chair of Governors with complaint



Chair of Governors writes to complainant within 7 school days with outcome of chairs investigation



In not resolved

#### STAGE 3

#### FORMAL PANEL REVIEW

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### Annex C

#### Stage 1 – Informal

Complaint at school level – parent should try and resolve the problem with the Class Teacher/Key Stage Leader/Assistant Head/Head teacher

Resolved?



Yes: No further action



#### Stage 2 – Formal Complaint

Complainant supplies detailed written complaint to Head teacher

Head Teacher will meet with and write to complainant with outcome of investigation

Resolved?



Yes: No further action



Complainant supplies detailed written complaint to the Chairman of Governors

Chair of Governors writes to complainant within 7 school days with outcome of chair's investigation

Resolved?



Yes: No further action



#### Stage 3 – Formal Panel Review

Complaint to the Governing Body. A complaints panel will meet to consider the complaint within 15 school days. The panel's decision is final.

Resolved?



Yes: No further action



#### Stage 4 – Secretary of State

The parent may decide to write to the Secretary of State for Education and Skills should they decide to further the complaint.